

A LETTER

from

The Authour of Sure-footing,
to his Answerer.

SIR,

I Am certainly inform'd there is an Answer to my Book intended, and a Person chosen out for that Employment; whose Name I am unconcern'd to know, it being only his Quality as a Writer I have to do with. I receive the Alarum with great chearfulness; knowing that, if my Adversary behaves himself well, it will exceedingly conduce to the clearing and settling the main point there controverted. But, because there is difference between being *call'd* an Answer and *being* an Answer, and that 'tis extremely opposit to my Genius, to be task't in laying open mens Faults even as Writers, (though it has been my unhappiness formerly to meet with Adversaries, whose way of writing made that carriage my only duty) wherefore to prevent, as much as I am able, all occasion of such unfavorable oppositions, and to make way to the clearing the point, that so our Discourse may redound to the profit and satisfaction of our Readers, I make bold to offer you these few Reflexions; which in effect contain no more but a Request you would speak to the *point*, and in such a *way* as is apt to bring the matter nearer a clearing. This if you please to do, you will

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very much credit your self and your endeavours in the opinion of all ingenuous persons. If you refuse, and rather chuse to run into Rhetorical Excursions, and such Discourses as are apt to breed new Controversies not pertinent to the present one under hand, you will extreamly disparage both your self, your party and your Cause, and give me an exceeding advantage against them all ; I shall also have the Satisfaction to have manifested before-hand by means of this Letter, that I have contributed as much as in me lies to make you avoid those Faults, which I must then be forc't to lay open and severely press upon you, little to your Credit nor your Causes neither; You being (as I am inform'd and Reason gives it) signally chosen out as held most able to maintain it.

2. That there may be no more distance between us than what our Cause enforces, I heartily assure you that though I highly dislike your Tenets negatively opposit to what we hold Faith, and the Way of Writing I foresee you must take (unless you resolve to love Candour better than your Cause) as being Inconclusive and so apt to continue not finish debates, yet I have not the least *pique* against yours or any mans Person. Nor have I any particular aversion against the Protestant party; rather I look upon it with a better eye than on any other Company whatever which has broke Communion with the Catholick Church : It preserves still unrenounc't the form of *Episcopacy*.



*pac*y, the Church-Government instituted by Christ; and many grave Solemnities and Ceremonies, which make our Union less difficult: Many of their soberest Writers acknowledge divers of the renounc't Tenets to be *Truths*: some of them also profess to hold *Tradition*, especially for Scripture's Letter; and even for those Points or Faith-Tenets in which they and we agree, that is, where their Interest is not touch'd. I wish they would as heartily hold to it in all other Points which descended by it, and look into the Virtue it has of *ascertaining*, and declare in what that Virtue *consists*; I am confident, a little candour of confessing truly what they find, joyn'd with an endeavour of looking into Things rather than Words, would easily make way to a fair Correspondence. I esteem, and even honour the Protestants from my heart for their firm Allegiance to his Sacred Majesty and his Royal Father; This uniting them already with all sober Catholics under that excellent notion of good Subjects, and in the same point of Faith, the Indispensableness of the duty of Allegiance we owe our Prince by Divine Law. Lastly I declare, that for this as well as for Charitable Considerations, I have a very particular zeal for their reconciliation to their Mother-Church; and that 'tis out of this love of Union I endeavour so earnestly to beat down the wordish and *dissatisfactory* way of Writing, and go about to *Evidence* the Ground of all our Faith; knowing, that, as wounds are

never connaturally and solidly cur'd, by uniting the distant sides at the surface, and leaving them disunited and unheal'd at the bottom, but the cure must begin there first; so, the onely Way to heal the Wounds of the Church, is to begin first to win some to acknowledge the most radical and bottom-Principle of all Faith, as controverted between us; without which all agreement in particular points must needs be unsound and hollow-hearted. This is my onely aym in *Sure-Footing*. That therefore you may not obstruct so good a work, and withall perform the duty of a solid and candid Writer, I offer to your self and all ingenuous Readers these few Reflexions: not sprung from my Will (for what Authority have I to prescribe you your method) but from true Reason working upon the Thing; which makes it just duty in you, and so ought oblige you to follow it.

3. In the first place, since the scope of my whole Book is about the *First Principle in Controversy*, or the Ground of all Faith, as to our Knowledge; that is, about a Point antecedent to all particular Points; I conceive it reasonable you should let your Discourse stand firm to the matter in hand, and not permit it to slide into Controversies about Particulars. For so, 'tis evident, we shall be apt to multiply many words little to our present purpose. On what conditions you may have right to alledge Particulars as pretended Instances of Traditions failing, shall be seen hereafter.

4. Next,

4. Next, I desire you would please to speak out Categorically, and declare whether you hold Faith *absolutely Certain to us*, or else *Possible to be false for any thing we know*. To explicate my self better, that so I may void some common and frivolous Distinctions, my intent is to demand of you in behalf of the Christian Reader and his due satisfaction, whether you hold Gods Providence has laid in the whole Creation any Certain means, by way of Proper Causes to such an Effect, to bring down Faith truly to us, and whether we can arrive at Certain Knowledge of those means, that is, come to *see* or *know* the Connexion between such Causes and their Effect spoken of. I make bold to press you earnestly to this declaration; and my reason is, because nothing will more conduce to the Conclusion of our present Debate: For, in case such Causes *be* laid and can be *seen* by us, then they are Evident or Demonstrative Reasons for the Ground of our Faith's Certainty: But, if no such Causes *be* laid, or being laid, cannot be *seen* by us, then all the Wit of man can never avoid the consequence, but that we can have onely Probability for all our Faith; that is, for any thing we absolutely know, 'tis all as false as an old wife's tale; since there are no *degrees* in Truths and Falshoods. If you advance this Civil piece of Atheistry, you must pardon me if I be smart with you in opposition to so damnable and Fundamental an Errour: I love Christianity and Mankind too

well to suffer that Position which destroyes effectually the Root of all their Eternal Happiness, and the Substance of all their Hope, to pass un-stigmatiz'd, as it deserves. Nor think to avail your self by some Discourfers in our Schools, It will be shown, when prest, that they are still preserv'd good Christians through the virtue of Tradition which they all hold to, notwithstanding their private speculations: but you not, because of your want of Certain Grounds, to make you rationally *hold* Christs Faith. They onely mistook a Word, whereas you will be found to erre in the whole *Thing*, or the ordinary Means to true Christianity.

Again, if such Causes be fitting to be laid by God's Providence, 'tis impossible to avoid the Doctrin propos'd in *Sure-Footing*, because 'tis absolutely Impossible to invent any thing that looks like such Causes, but those which are deliver'd there; nor did any other Way ever attempt to show any such. Whence I foresee your Cause will force you to fly for refuge to the actual Uncertainty, or possible Falshood of all our Faith for any thing any man living knows by ordinary means. A sad consequence of an erroneous tenet! But 'tis connatural, and, so to be expected, such Effects should follow the renouncing the Rule of Faith.

5. Thirdly, I conceive it very reasonable that you would please to declare whether *Controversy* ought to have any First Principle or no; If none, then

then to speak candidly out, and confess that *Contravertists* are *Certain* of *nothing* they say, since their discourse has no *Ground* or *First Principle* to rely on. If *any*, whether Tradition be It; or, if it be not, what else is; and then vouch (as plain reason tells us you ought) that what you assigne has truly in it the nature of a *First Principle*, which common Reason gives to be *self-evidence*. Or, lastly, to profess (if you judge it your best play) that, what you substitute instead of Tradition, though it be a *First Principle*, yet it need not be at all *self-evident*. Any thing shall content me, so you will but please to speak out, and to the point.

6. Again, since it is evidently your task to argue against *Tradition's Certainty*, 'tis as Evident that while you argue against it, you must bear your self as holding It *uncertain*; I conceive then plain Reason obliges you not to produce any thing *against* Tradition which depends *upon* Tradition for its Certainty; for, in doing so you would invalidate and even nullify all your own proofs: Since, if Tradition be held by you uncertain, and they have no certainty but by means of It, they must be confest Uncertain too; and so they would be incompetent to be product as *proofs*, and your self very *dis-ingenuous* to produce them: I add *self-contradicting* too, and *Unskilful*; Nature and *Aristotle* teaching us, that a Discourser ought not sustain contrary to himself. Hence plainest Reason excludes you

from alledging any kind of Testimony, either from Scripture, Councils, Fathers, or History, till you answer my Corollaries 12, 15, 16. which pretend to demonstrate the Certainty of all these dependent on Tradition's; and the onely way to show my discourses there to be weak, is to manifest my mistake by declaring into what other thing your Certainty of those Testimonies is finally resolvable, which is not coincident with Tradition. When you produce such a Principle, and prove it such, you have right to alledge the foresaid Testimonies, for then you can make good their Authority: Till then, you can have no right in true reason to do it. Not onely, because till then you are to be held a Renouncer of that Thing of Certainty upon which there are pretended demonstrations against you. Theirs is built; and those presum'd true ones, because you let such strongest Attempts pass unanswer'd; but very particularly for this Consideration that our present matter restrains you from it: For, our discourse is about the Ground of that Authority which ascertains to us Faith; which therefore is antecedent to the notions of Faith, Faithful, Church, Councils, Fathers, nay and creditable History-books too; since those rely on Tradition (taken at large) for their Certainty, as is evident by plain reason, Coroll. 16, 24. which devolves into this, that Tradition is **FIRST AUTHORITY**, and so not proovable or disprovable by any other secondary *Authorities*, but ought to be

from be impugn'd by pure *Reason*. But, if you think
 you fit to grant this Certainty to Tradition taken at
 tend large, yet deny it to *Christian* Tradition, which
 hath, besides its Human force, most powerful Di-
 vine Motives also to strengthen it; please to speak
 it out, and the strange unreasonableness of the
 position will quickly be made appear. Or, if you
 grant *Christian* Tradition Certain in bringing
 down those common Points in which we agree,
 yet Fallible, nay actually erring, in bringing down
 to us those other points which we were found
 holding upon Tradition when you left us, and for
 which, as grievous Errors, you pretended to leave
 us; please to declare in what you hold the *virtue*
 of Tradition consists, *ascertaining* to us both
 those common points, and how we come to know
 Tradition is engag'd for them; which done, it
 will quickly appear whether its *ascertaining* vir-
 tue has its Effect upon *some*, and not others; or
 upon *all*. Unless you do this, your very admittance
 of Tradition's Certainty in *some*, overthrows
 you without more ado: for, to acknowledge it
 is argumentative for the Certainty of *some*, grants
 it a virtue of *Ascertaining*, which therefore you
 are oblig'd to grant in *all*, unless you give the
 reason of your Exception: otherwise to admit it
 when your Interest is not toucht, and reject it
 when it opposes you, is plainly to confess that
 Tradition is able to *certify*, yet that you admit
 it when you list, and reject it when you list.

7. Being inform'd then by Evident Reason,
 that

that no kind of Authority but only the way of Reason is a competent Weapon to fight against Tradition with ; I have three things to propose to your Thoughts on this occasion, which I hope will sound reasonable to any intelligent man by the very mentioning. First, that you would not alledge such Arguments as strike as well at the Constancy of every *Species* in Nature, especially Rational Nature ; that is, such natural *Medicines* as tend to destroy all Natural Certainty. Secondly, that your objections be not forrain, or fetch't from afar of ; for these are multipliable without End, and apt to be suggested by Fancy upon every not-seeing the coherence of some other remote (whether real or conceited) Truth, with the Tenet we aim to impugn ; but that they be *immediate* and *close*, that is, taken out of the Intrinsic Nature of the Thing ; For so, they will be more forcible and by consequence be apt to do your Cause much service ; and unless they be such, they will do it none : For, in regard my whole process is grounded on the nature of the Thing, as appears by my Transition, and every Logician knows that *remote* and *common* considerations are liable, for any thing we know, to be connected or not-connected with the point we would apply them to, because we see no Connexion but what's Immediate ; it follows that 'tis a very incompetent and dissatisfactory way to impugn an Adversary who endeavours all along to frame his discourse out of the

the Intrinsic Nature of the Thing, by remote, or unimmediate, that is, indeed, *Unconnected Mediums*. The third thing I request is, that you either grant that no Argument or Reason is Conclusive, Obliging-to-Assent, or Satisfactory, but what is either Proper (at least Necessary) Cause or Effect ; or else show us out of Logick that other *Mediums* have this virtue, and how they come to have it. This way of procedure will give me a great respect for you as talking honestly the Way which is apt to clear Truth ; and you will have this Satisfaction to your Conscience that you have endeavour'd it to your power by following the best method you could imagin to give your Cause its due advantage, in case it can bear that Test ; that is, in case it be Truth. And, if it cannot bear it, that is, if it be no Truth, 'tis your own best Advantage by this strict procedure to have discover'd it. Your Judicious Readers also that look seriously for satisfaction, will rest much edify'd and thankfull for your pursuing that Method which is likely to save them a great deal of fruitless pains in reading multitudes of books writ in a loose way, whence no Conclusion or Satisfaction is likely to result.

8. My fifth request, and I hope 'tis just and reasonable, is this ; that, if you conceive your Discourse has made good the Certainty of Written Authorities or quoted Testimonies, *without* Tradition, (which I see is impossible,) and hence
you

you make account you have title to produce them against Tradition's Certainty, (That being the matter in hand) and therefore you resolve to pursue the way of Citing Authours; you would then be pleas'd to vouch your Citations to have truly in them the nature of Testimonies; that is, to be built on *Sensible* Knowledge, and not on *Speculative*, or Opinion in the Author alledg'd, and that they fall under none of Dr. *Pierce's* faulty or Inconclusive Heads; or else show they are Conclusive though thus Faulty, which is done by confuting my Grounds laid in my First Appendix. §. 6, 7, 8. Or, lastly, to declare, that though thus Faulty and Inconclusive they ought still to be alledg'd; and to give your reason for it; which, candidly spoken out, I am sure will be this, that you must either produce such, or none. I hope all our ingenuous Readers will think me very reasonable, who am well contented with any thing which is spoke out expressly and declaratively of what *method* or *way* of *Satisfying* you take; and onely desire you would not quote and speak *confusedly* and *in common*, as if you meant to persuade your Readers that your discourse has in it some strange force taken in the bulk, though you will vouch no one particular piece of it to be Certain; or, as if you suppos'd their reasons were to be amaz'd and stupify'd meerly at the venerable *Names* of Authors and the solemnity of a diverse-letter'd, or diverse-languag'd quotation, without

without clearing to their Judgements the *virtue* by which such Citations can pretend to have force able to subdue their understandings to Assent, or (which is all one) *satisfy* them. If you refuse to do me reason in this point, and still resolve to pursue the huddling together Testimonies without warranting their Certainty by showing upon rational grounds they must be such, I shall declare beforehand to my Readers, that I must be forc't to do right to my self; which is, to rank all your Testimonies under Dr. *Pierce's* Faulty Heads, and so let them go as they are.

9. Particularly, I beg the Justice of you not to think to over-bear me with the conceiv'd Authority of other Divines' resolving Faith in their Speculative Thoughts after another manner than I do: since this can onely tend to stir up Invidiousness against my person (which yet their charity secures me from) and not any wayes to invalidate my discourse. For, every one knows tis no news Divines should differ in their way of explicating their Tenet, which they both notwithstanding hold never the less firmly; and every learned man understands that the word *Divine*, importing a man of *Skill* or *Knowledge* in such a matter, no Divine has any Authority but from the Goodness of the Proofs or Reasons he brings and on which he builds that Skill. Please then to bring, not the empty pretence of a Divines Authority or Name to oppose me with, and I shall freely give you leave to make use of the *Vir-*

one of their Authorities, that is their *Reasons* against me as much as you will. I easily yeeld to those great discourfers, whoever they be, a precedency in other Speculations and Knowledges, to which they have been more addicted, and for which they have been better circumstanc't; In this one of the Ground of Faith, both my much Practice, my particular Application, my Discourses with our nations best Wits of all sorts, my perusing our late acute Adversaries and the Answers to them, with other Circumstances; and lastly, my serious and industrious studying the Point, join'd with the clearing Method God's Providence has led me to, have left me (as far as I know) in no disadvantage. What would avail you against me and our Church too (for my Interest as defending Tradition is indissolubly linkt with Hers) is, to show that our Church proceeds not on Tradition, or that in Her Definitions She professes to resolve Faith another way rather than mine, or (which is equivalent) to rely on something else more firmly and fundamentally than on Tradition. But the most expresse and manifold Profession of the Council of *Trent* to rely constantly on Tradition, has so put this beyond all possible Cavil on my side, that I neither fear your Skill can show my Grounds in the least subcontrary to hers, nor the Goodness of any Learned and considering Catholik (however some may conceive the Infallibility of the Church plac't *ad abundantiam* in

in something else) will or can ever dislike it. I expect you may go about to disgrace my Way as *new*: But I must ask, whether you mean the *substance* of it is *new*, or onely that 'tis now *deeper* look't into and *farther* explicated than formerly: If you say the former, my *Consent of Authorities* (p. 126, 127, &c.) has clearly shown the contrary; and common sense tells us no other way was or could be possibly taken (for the Generality of the Church at least) in Primitive times till Scripture was published universally and collected: If the later, please to reflect, that every *farther* Explication or Declaration, as far as 'tis *farther*, must needs be *new*; and so, instead of disgracing us, you most highly commend our reasons for drawing consequences *farther* than others had done before us. Again, if it be onely a farther *Explication*, 'tis for that very reason *not-new*; since the Sence of the Explication is the same with the thing explicated; As 'tis onely an Explication, then 'tis *not-new*; as *farther*, 'tis indeed *new*, but withal innocent, nay commendable. But there are three things more to be said on occasion of this objecting Catholick Divines; One is, that, taking Tradition for the living voice of the present Church as I constantly declare my self to do, not one Catholick does or can deny it; for he would *eo ipso* become no-Catholick but an Arch-heretick; and this all acknowledge. In the *thing explicated* then, that is, in the notion of Tradition all agree with me (and consequently in the *Substance* of

of my Explication) nor can any do otherwise, except they be equivocated in the Word *Tradition* and mistake my meaning, which I conceive none will do wilfully after they have read here my declaration of it so unmistakably laid down. The second thing is, that an Alledger of those Divines will onely quote their Words as Speculators, not those in which they deliver themselves naturally as Christians or Believers ; which Sayings were they collected, we should finde them unanimously sounding to my advantage, and not one of them oppositely. And, lastly, speaking of our Explication as to its *manner*, Divines contradict one another in other kinds of Explications, but not one Author can be alledged that expressly contradicts this which I follow.

10. My sixth request is, that you would speak to the main of my Book, and not catch at some odd words, on the by as it were : Otherwise, understanding Readers will see this is not to answer but to cavil.

11. And, because we are (I hope) both of us endeavouring to clear Truth (I am sure we ought to be so) therefore, to acquit your self to your Readers that you ingenuously aim at it, I conceive you will do your self a great deal of right, and me but reason, nay (which is yet weightier) do the common Cause best service, if you will joyn with me to retrench our Controversie as much as we can. Let us then avoid all Rhetorical Digressions and Affectations of Witty and fine

fine Language; which I have declin'd in my
 whole Book, and chosen a plain downright man-
 ner of Expression, as most suitable and con-
 natu-
 ral to express Truth. Likewise all Repetitions
 of what particulars others have said or answer'd
 before us, such as are the Objections made by
 that ingenious person, the L. *Faukland*, and the
 Answers given them in the Apology for Tradition;
 unless it be conceiv'd those Solutions are in-
 sufficient, and Reasons be offer'd why they are
 judg'd so. For I conceive it an endless folly to
 transcribe and reprint any thing others have done
 before us, except it be Grounds which ought to
 be oft inculcated and stuck to; and those parti-
 culars which we show to be not yet invalidated,
 but to preserve still their strength. Much less
 do I suspect it can fall under the thought of one
 who aims to discourse rationally (such my An-
 swerer ought to be) to take together all the filth
 and froth of the unwarrantable Actions or Op-
 nions of some in the Church, or to run on end-
 lessly with multitudes of invective & invidious say-
 ings on his own head without proof; & then apply
 them to the Church, as does the Disswader. It
 would also very much conduce to the bringing
 our differences to a narrower compass if you
 would candidly take my Book endways, and
 declare what in it is evident, and so to be allow-
 ed; what not: What Principles are well laid or
 Consequences right drawn; and what are other-
 wise; To requite which favours, I promise the

same Carriage in my Reply to you. By this means it will be quickly discover'd whether or no you have overthrown my Discourse by showing it ill coherent, and how far 'tis faulty; that, if I cannot clear it to be connected, I may confess my fault and endeavour to amend it. For, however I see my Grounds Evident, yet I am far from judging my self Infallible in drawing my Consequences; though I see withal the method I take, will not let me err much; Or, if I do, my Error will be easily discoverable; because I go not about to cloud my self in *words*, but to speak out as plain as I can from the nature of the *Thing*.

12. In the next place I earnestly request you, as you love Truth, not to shuffle of the giving me a full Answer, nor to desist from your Enterprize (as I hear a Certain person of great esteem for his learning and prudence has already done) though you find some difficulty where to fasten upon the Substantial part of my discourse. There are perhaps many difficult passages which my Shortness forc't me to leave Obscure; These will naturally occasion mistake, and Mistake will breed Objections to impugn me with. Please, if others fail, to make use of those at least. 'Tis no discredit in you to mistake what's obscure; rather it argues a fault in me (did not my circumstance of writing Grounds, & onely to Schollers, excuse me) that I left it so; To make amends for which I promise you to render it clear when

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I see where it pinches you or others. And on this score, I owe very particular thanks to Mr *Stillington*, that by speaking clearly out his thoughts, he gave me a fair occasion to open that point he impugn'd, I think, upon mistake of our Tenet.

13. If you think fit sometimes to argue *ad hominem*, be sure what you build on be either our Churches Tenet or mine; for I am bound to defend nothing else. If then you quote Fathers, first, see they speak as Fathers, that is as Believers and Witnesses; for so 'tis evident our Church means them by her Expressions in the Council of *Trent*; as also did Antiquity. For both of them constantly alledge and stand upon *Traditio Patrum*, not *Opinio Patrum*: Next, see you bring *Consensus Patrum*, or an agreement at least of very many of them speaking as Witnesses, otherwise you will not touch me nor our Church; for she never abetted them further. In case you bring Councils, it would be very efficacious you would chuse such Testimonies (if you can finde them) as I brought from the Council of *Trent*; that is, such in which they declare themselves (or the Circumstances give it) they proceed upon their *Rule of Faith*: For, otherwise, every one knows that Bishops in a Council have in them, besides the Quality of *Faith Definers*, those also of Governours, and of the most Eminent and solid *Divines* in God's Church. If Scripture, you must make Evident the Certainty of your way of arguing from it, ere I or our Church shall allow

it argumenative. Thus much for Authority. If you oppose me by my own Principles or Discourses of my Reason, I must defend my self as well as I can. One thing on this occasion, I must mind you of; 'tis this, that though you should conquer in this way of arguing *ad hominem*, you onely conquer *me* as a Discourser, by showing that I contradict my self; not my *Tenet*: for to prove that false, you must fix your foot and build your discourse on some Certain Ground; which barely my *holding* it (on which your discourse *ad hominem* relies) cannot make it. You must build then on some Grounded Truth if you will go about to overthrow a pretended one. Indeed, if you can show Tradition contradicts her self, you will do more than miracle, and so must conquer. But I fear not the Gates of Hell, much less Man's wit can prevail against that impregnable Rock. Onely, I beseech you bring not as Parallels against our Tradition in hand, which is a vast and strong stream, other little petty rivulets sprung originally from the Sensations of two or three: For, then, as one side was liable, in a thing not known publicly, to bely their Senses; so the conveyance down of such sleight built Attestations may easily be self-contradictory. In a word, if you will argue, take first into your Thoughts the nature of the Thing you argue against, and then fall to work as soon as you will. Now, if you should chance to say you hold the Sayings of Fathers and Councils (some at least, to be *Certain*,
my

my Reason tells me from Principles, that, having renounc'd Tradition which onely could ascertain them, rational nature in you will not let you have any hearty conceit of their Convictiveness, whatever you pretend ; but that you rawly alledge them, and so let them go with a *valeant quantum valere possunt*. That therefore we may have some security more than your bare word (which Experience tells us is now affirmative now negative in this point, as it best suits your Interest, or, after a pretty Indifferent manner, half-one-half-tother) that your profession of holding to such Authorities is not hollow-hearted but rooted in your Reason, 'tis just your Readers should expect you would declare in what the virtue of *Certifying* consists, and that They have this virtue. This if you do, you acquit your self to go to work solidly, and you offer us fair play in giving us some hold of your Reason, whereas a common Expression gives none. This Procedure also will show, when apply'd, whether you are Justifiable or no for admitting some Authorities of that nature and rejecting others.

14. My last request is, that, if in the course of your Answer you think fit to complain of me for bringing History and other Proofs heretofore commonly without more ado admitted, into Incertainty : please to amend the fault you finde, and settle their Certainty on some better Principles than I have endeavour'd. In the mean time 'tis Evident my whole Eock aymes at settling the Certainty of
all

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all Authority, by evidencing the Certainty of *First Authority*; upon which the Assuredness of History, Fathers, Councils, Church, Faith, nay Virtue or Christian Life must all be built. This is my way; if you judge it incompetent to do the Effect spoken of, be pleas'd to manifest it Unfit and show us a Better.

15. Perhaps I may have demanded more of you in some particulars than is due from the strict duty of meerly answering: in the Schools, a bare denial, or distinction is enough for a Respondent. But I conceive *we* are not on these terms: in regard we are not met face to face, where the returns of the one to the other can be quick on every occasion. This obliges us, for the Readers satisfaction, to enlarge our selves and bring reason for every thing we affirm or deny, lest we should be thought to do it *gratis*. And, your case here, is particularly disadvantageous: For, if you go about to overthrow that on which I aym to show the Certainty of all Authority built, and yet *declare* not on what your self hold them built, and, by your faithful promise to show it shortly, give them strong hopes you will perform it; you send them away very much dissatisfy'd either with you or with all the Authority in the world, though built on Sensitive Knowledge: Of which it being impossible Rational Nature should permit them to doubt, they must needs dislike your attempt, and have an ill conceit of your performance.

S I R,

SIR, I understand, to my exceeding Satisfaction, that multitudes of the most Eminent, Solid and Ingenuous Wits of our Nation have been diligent perusers of my Book. Consider, their eyes are upon you while you Answer; I am confident they will judge I have requested no more of you in this Letter, but what's reasonably due to their and my Satisfaction; and so, will look your Answer should be correspondent. They are weary of endless Contests about Faith; and, seeing we are not now controverting the signification of some ambiguous Testimony, but penetrating deep into the very bowels of a point which is of the greatest concern in the whole world; and pursuing (in a method likely to decide) the clearing of it, their expectations are very much erected and attentively observing what will be the issue of this rational combat. Frustrate not their desires to see Truth manifested by bringing the Question back from the plain open field of Evidence in our method, to a Logomachy or word-skirmish in a Wilderness of Talk; out of which the Thread of Grounds or Principles had disengaged it. To them therefore as well as your self I address this; requesting those of them who are acquainted with my Answerer, to press him to do himself, me, the world (his Cause too, if it can bear it) the right due in Reason, and here demanded. This Sir, if you will perform, I shall lay aside the remembrance of the Justice I have to it, and look upon it purely as a Favour and most obliging Civility to him who is, next to Truth's,

Feb. 6th
1665.

Your Friend and well-wisher,
J. S.

POSTSCRIPT.

IF you complain of this Fore-stalling as *Un-usual*; as long as 'tis *rational* you can have no reason to do so: and it will appear *such* to him that considers 'it was an *unusual* Circumstance occasion'd it. 'Tis this: I had endeavour'd to bring Controversie from an Endless to a Conclusive Way: and both my Reason and Experience made me apprehend my Protestant Answerer would have such strong Inclinations to bring it back into the way of quoting and glossing Testimonies (that is, into a wordish scanning a great part of all the Libraries in the World) that a slender touch at it in my Book was not forcible and express enough to oblige him to take notice of it. Having communicated therefore my thoughts with intelligent and ingenuous persons, both Catholiks and Protestants, and receiv'd their approbation, I resolv'd, and pursu'd it as you see; And I hope the manifold Usefulness of it (as shall be seen what way soever now you take upon you of answering) will sufficiently justify my Action.

FINIS.



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